

October 11,2001

Health Department Prepared to Respond to Community Concerns

The Environmental Health Division at Central District Health Department (CDHD) responds to over 300 consumer calls each year regarding possible food or water contamination. CDHD's Epidemiology and Surveillance Program responds to dozens of calls each week regarding communicable diseases and staff epidemiologists investigate over 200 reported cases of infectious disease each year. At this very critical time in our nation's history, CDHD wants to assure the citizens it serves that Central District Health Department, hospitals and laboratories, health care providers, public safety officials, and many others are working together to protect and enhance our community's health. The following example demonstrates the importance of excellent communication, cooperation and timely response between local and state agencies.

On Wednesday evening, October 10th, Environmental Health staff from Central District Health Department (CDHD) responded to an incident involving possibly contaminated bottled water purchased at a local convenience store. The bottled water appeared to contain a substance that the purchaser(s) didn't notice until they drank from the bottle(s). Concerned that the water might have been purposely contaminated, Boise police were called to the scene. The officers decided that health officials should be notified and used the state's communication system to notify the Idaho Division of Health. A representative of the Division of Health contacted environmental staff at CDHD, who responded immediately.

CDHD staff interviewed the concerned individuals and the remainder of the water was delivered to the Idaho state laboratory for testing. At this time it appears that the suspicious substance in the water is a result of algal contamination, but the laboratory will thoroughly test the samples submitted for testing to identify any possible pathogen.

This incident is a good example of the teamwork and thorough professionalism of those in our community committed to protecting the health and well-being of its citizens.

#